

Message Text

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ACTION SCS-06

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3432

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 20376

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CASC CDES (GOLDEN, WILLIAM)
SUBJ: LETTER FROM MRS. WILLIAM GOLDEN TO SECRETARY VANCE

FOR NEA/EGY & SCS

REF: EILTS-MATTHEWS TELECON OF SEPT. 1

1. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED LETTERS DATED AUGUST 23 AND 24 FROM MRS. KATHLEEN GOLDEN, WIDOW OF WILLIAM GOLDEN, WHO WAS KILLED IN EGYPT MARCH 8; COPIES OF LETTER SENT TO SECRETARY VANCE, AMBASSADOR EILTS, AND SENATOR HAYAKAWA. FOR DEPARTMENT'S ASSISTANCE IN REPLYING TO SEPARATE LETTER OF AUG. 24 TO SECRETARY VANCE, THERE FOLLOWS GENERAL OUTLINE OF DEVELOPMENTS IN CASE, AS WELL AS INFORMATION RELEVANT TO SPECIFIC COMMENTS IN MRS. GOLDEN'S LETTER. CONSUL TO WHOM LETTER ADDRESSED WILL ALSO REPLY DIRECTLY. FILE REFLECTS ONLY TWO PREVIOUS LETTERS FROM MRS. GOLDEN, DATED APRIL 18 AND JULY 15, TO WHICH WE REPIED MAY 12 AND JULY 28.

2. GENERAL OUTLINE:
MARCH 8, 1978: EMBASSY NOTIFIED BY EGYPTIAN SECURITY POLICE OF CRASH OF PRIVATE PLANE NEAR ASWAN IN WHICH GOLDEN AND COLLEAGUES KILLED. DEPARTMENT AND NEXT-OF-KIN NOTIFIED.
DURING FOLLOWING WEEK: BELONGINGS OF GOLDEN AND COLLEAGUES
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LEFT IN THEIR HOTEL ROOMS WERE PICKED UP AND DELIVERED TO EMBASSY BY HAWAIIAN AGRONOMICS REPRESENTATIVE. SOME BELONGINGS GROUPED AND IDENTIFIED AS BELONGING TO SPECIFIC INDIVIDUAL, OTHER ITEMS GROUPED TOGETHER.
MARCH 16: REMAINS SHIPPED TO US.
DURING FOLLOWING WEEK: ITEMS FROM CRASH SITE DELIVERED TO EMBASSY BY REPRESENTATIVE OF HAWAIIAN AGRONOMICS.

APRIL 21: COMMERCIAL CABLES RECEIVED FROM MRS. GOLDEN REQUESTING THAT GOLDEN'S INCOME TAX PAPERS BE SENT URGENTLY TO HER. PAPERS WERE NOT IMMEDIATELY IDENTIFIABLE AMONG EFFECTS ALREADY SURVEYED; IN VIEW OF URGENCY OF REQUEST, CONSULAR SECTION BROKE INTO LOCKED BRIEF CASE, FOUND PAPERS, AND FORWARDED THEM TO MRS. GOLDEN SAME DAY.

MAY 9: REPORT OF DEATH AND INVENTORY OF EFFECTS OF GOLDEN AND COLLEAGUES COMPLETED; REPORT OF DEATH FORWARDED MAY 9.

MAY 12: COPY OF INVENTORY OF EFFECTS SENT TO MRS. GOLDEN.

WEEK OF MAY 15: BEST METHOD OF AIR FREIGHTING EFFECTS TO FAMILIES DISCUSSED WITH EMBASSY SHIPPING UNIT. REPRESENTATIVE OF PACKING/SHIPPING COMPANY CAME TO EMBASSY TO REVIEW TASK AT HAND, AGREED TO HANDLE SHIPPING.

MAY 24: REPRESENTATIVE OF PACKING/SHIPPING COMPANY PICKED UP ITEMS FOR CRATING AND SHIPPING.

MAY 26: SMALLER VALUABLE ITEMS, PAPERS, AND TRAVELERS CHECKS MAILED BY INSURED FBO MAIL TO MRS. GOLDEN.

JUNE 21: FINAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT, WITH TREASURY CHECK FOR BALANCE OF ESTATE, MAILED TO MRS. GOLDEN.

JULY 11: CONSULAR SECTION LEARNS THAT EFFECTS HAVE NOT YET LEFT EGYPT BECAUSE OF DIFFICULTIES WITH CUSTOMS CLEARANCE. CUSTOMS CLEARANCE HAD NOT SPECIFICALLY BEEN DENIED, BUT RESPONSIBLE OFFICE HAD NOT ACTED ON ORIGINAL REQUEST AND TWO FOLLOW-UP REQUESTS.

JULY 18: SHIPMENTS FINALLY LEAVE CAIRO.

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3. MRS. GOLDEN'S SPECIFIC COMMENTS:

A. WHY WERE EFFECTS SENT TO LOS ANGELES AND NOT SAN FRANCISCO?

SHIPPING COMPANY, EXPRESS INTERNATIONAL, ACCEPTS RESPONSIBILITY FOR ERROR. THEY WERE GIVEN MRS. GOLDEN'S HOME ADDRESS IN LAKEPORT, CALIFORNIA, BUT ASSUMED THAT LOS ANGELES WAS CLOSEST INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. THEY SINCERELY REGRET INCONVENIENCE CAUSED BY ERROR.

B. SLASHED BRIEF CASE, QUALITY OF PACKING.

IT WAS NECESSARY TO CUT OPEN BRIEF CASE IN ORDER TO RESPOND EXPEDITIOUSLY TO MRS. GOLDEN'S REQUEST FOR INCOME TAX PAPERS. WE HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO LOCATE PAPERS ELSEWHERE, AT SAME TIME COULD NOT BE SURE THEY WERE IN BRIEF CASE. OTHER ITEMS, MANY BADLY DAMAGED IN CRASH, WERE PACKED AS COMPACTLY AS POSSIBLE IN CONTAINERS AVAILABLE AS PART OF ESTATE; SHIPPING COMPANY WAS ENTRUSTED WITH TASK OF PROVIDING EXTERNAL PACKING FOR TRANSPORT.

C. MIX-UP IN SOME ITEMS AND PAPERS.

WHEN CONSULAR SECTION RECEIVED EFFECTS, SOME OF THEM WERE IDENTIFIED AS BELONGING TO ONE OF THE DECEASED, OTHERS

WERE DESCRIBED UNIDENTIFIABLE. WE DID NOT QUESTION SPECIFIC DESIGNATIONS TO POINT OF EXAMINING ALL PAPERS AND NOTEBOOKS FOR VERIFYING INFORMATION. BELIEVE THIS ACCOUNTS FOR MINOR MIX-UPS.

D. DELAY IN DELIVERY OF ACCIDENT REPORT.

ALTHOUGH ACCIDENT REPORT MAY BE DATED APRIL, IT WAS NOT RELEASED BY EGYPTIAN MINISTRY UNTIL JUNE 8, 1978. EMBASSY FORWARDED IT TO DEPARTMENT, IN ITS ARABIC VERSION, ON JUNE 14. FURTHER DELAY IN FORWARDING TO FAMILIES WAS

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FOR NEA/EGY & SCS

PROBABLY DUE TO NECESSITY OF HAVING IT TRANSLATED.

E. ITEM IN REPORT THAT ONE OF VICTIMS WAS STILL ALIVE AFTER CRASH.

WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO DISCOVER, THROUGH EGYPTIAN AUTHORITIES, WHO THIS MAY HAVE BEEN, AND WILL INFORM DEPARTMENT OF RESULTS OF INQUIRY.

F. RAPIDITY WITH WHICH DECEASED BRITISH SUBJECT'S BELONGINGS REACHED HIS FAMILY.

IT WAS PHYSICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR CONSULAR STAFF TO COLLECT, SEPARATE, AND INVENTORY EFFECTS OF THREE AMERICAN VICTIMS IN TIME FOR EFFECTS TO LEAVE EGYPT WITH BODIES WHICH WOULD HAVE SIMPLIFIED CUSTOMS PROBLEMS.

4. IN SEPARATE LETTER DATED AUGUST 23, MRS. GOLDEN INQUIRES ABOUT VARIOUS OF HER HUSBAND'S BELONGINGS THAT DID NOT APPEAR ON THE INVENTORY AND THAT WERE NOT RETURNED TO HER.

WE HAVE MADE INQUIRIES, BUT NO ONE CAN CONFIRM EXISTENCE OF ANY OF ITEMS. CLOTHING GOLDEN WAS WEARING AT TIME OF CRASH WAS APPARENTLY THROWN AWAY.

5. WE BELIEVE MOST OF DELAY/INEFFICIENCY ABOUT WHICH MRS. GOLDEN WRITES CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO NORMAL PACE OF BUREAUCRACY IN EGYPT, AS WELL AS COMPLEXITY OF JOB, DICTATED BY PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF CASE AS WELL AS UNCLASSIFIED

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BY REGULATIONS, WHICH HAD TO BE DONE BY BUSY CONSULAR SECTION WITH LIMITED AREA IN WHICH TO WORK. CLOSER FOLLOW-UP AMONG EMBASSY SECTIONS, AS WELL AS BETWEEN EMBASSY AND SHIPPING COMPANY, WOULD HAVE PREVENTED SOME DELAY. DISTANCE OF CRASH SITE IN ASWAN FROM CAIRO MADE INSPECTION OF CRASH SITE BY CONSULAR PERSONNEL IMPOSSIBLE, AND MEANT THAT WE HAD TO RELY ON EGYPTIAN AUTHORITIES FOR ASSISTANCE AND INFORMATION, AND ADDED TO COMMUNICATION PROBLEM.

6. ESSENCE OF MRS. GOLDEN'S LETTER IS OF COURSE CHARGE OF "INEFFICIENCY AND/OR I DO NOT CARE ATTITUDE". WE SINCERELY REGRET THAT MRS. GOLDEN HAS RECEIVED THIS IMPRESSION; CONTRARY TO HER OPINION, ENTIRE STAFF FELT DEEPLY FOR HER IN HER LOSS. MATTHEWS

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